



Johanna Baxter

National Executive Committee

Putting Members First

Report of National Executive Committee meeting held on 27th November 2012

This was the NEC's 'away' day (though we don't actually go away anywhere) which sets the party's priorities for the year ahead. It was also the first meeting following the new composition of the committee so Peter Wheeler and Steve Rotherham were welcomed as newly elected members.

Aims & Objectives

The General Secretary gave an overview of what he was looking to achieve in the year ahead. Whilst to date he has focused on the party's finances, restructuring HQ, and putting resources into campaigning in the year ahead he wants the organisation to concentrate on one central objective "to create a campaigning movement that seeks to achieve real change and build trust in communities to win elections at all levels across the country". He wants to increase capacity and create a culture within the party focused on respect, empowerment and inclusion. We had detailed presentations from each of the party's Executive Directors about how they would deliver this within their departments. It would be impossible to reproduce all of those here due to their length but the key points, in no particular order, were:

- Ed's One Nation theme will be developed further in the weeks and months ahead and that policy agenda will be a central feature of the party's route map to the next general election.
- We will vigorously pursue the Coalition on the issues of rising living standards, fairness and their approach to the banks.
- There will be push on regional recruitment of staff in January 2013 and a second trainee organiser scheme will be run if finances allow.
- There will obviously be a lot of work done on ensuring that as many PPCs are selected as quickly as possible – the general secretary has already committed to having over 100 in place over the course of the year but those don't include trigger ballots for sitting MPs who are seeking re-selection.
- There will be a residential training program in Community Organising run over the course of next year – lead by [Arnie Graf](#) - which will be rolled out to party staff, NEC members, CLP Organisers and then other party stakeholders.
- There will be a complete overhaul & re-launch of Contact Creator which will fundamentally change the database architecture to incorporate elements of Van, the system on which the Obama campaign was run. A competition will be held amongst members to rename the system and there are efforts to ensure that this new functionality will enable the party to have an iPhone/iPad/Smart-phone app which will allow users to 'live' input. I stressed the importance of ensuring that this re-launch was accompanied by extensive training for users and this was agreed.
- Next year will also see a new volunteer management tool rolled out across the party, 'OneNationBuilder', which, unsurprisingly given the name, is based on the Nation Builder software that was used to power the Mayoral election campaign activity. It will be fully integrated with the membership system and the new version of Contact Creator giving CLPs access to local website applications and the ability to better track and mobilise member/supporter activity. I pressed for a user-panel to be developed so that the application can be tested by people that will actually use it on the ground before it is rolled out nationally. I have also asked that Scotland is in the first tranche of the roll-out so they are given maximum tech support in their campaign to protect the union given the very significant independence referendum in 2014.
- Olly Buston, in Members & Supporters, will be working to ensure that new members have a better welcome and are asked what they are interested in doing/discussing. He will also be working on improving the member experience more generally – personalising communication, making sure that resources members rely on are available when they need them (I have previously asked that the switchboard hours are extended and he has already facilitated this) and increasing the services available to role holders. I have asked that training for new CLP Chairs and Secretaries is rolled-out as previously committed to in Refounding Labour, that CLPs are given easy access lists of all their new registered supporters and more resources to recruit locally.
- The new [Your Britain](#) policy hub will continue to be developed. There will be a People's Policy Forum on the 23rd March next year and a meeting of the National Policy Forum in early summer.
- In comms there will continue to be a focus on ensuring our messages get publicity. There has been an increased level of activity in terms of digital media – the @Labourpress twitter team now has a greater following than the Conservative team – and you will see more use of new and alternative media.

- There will be an increase in activity for the Thousand Club, a more strategic approach to low value fundraising and a new Fundraising Officer will be appointed in 2013.

Elections

Our Executive Director for Field Operations, took us through a breakdown of the party's performance at the recent by-elections, PCC and the Bristol Mayoral elections. The most notable aspect was the historic low turnout in all the elections – with only Corby out-performing the others in this respect. It was noted that the postal vote turnout in the PCC elections had been healthy at around 50% but without them actual turnout – people turning up to polling stations - would have been as low as 5% in some areas. Whilst this was symptomatic of the fact this was an unpopular policy issue on which voters had little information and it was the middle of winter this is still something that should concern all political parties. It was noted that many staff had gone straight from one by-election to another and had been on 'election footing' for nearly the whole year – steps are being taken to ensure staff are given appropriate time off once the by-elections on the 29th Nov are over.

Leader & Deputy Leader Reports

Both Ed and Harriet thanked everyone who had worked so hard in the recent by-elections, PCC and the Bristol Mayoral campaigns and it was noted that Corby in particular had demonstrated that the party had made good progress.

Harriet concentrated on the forthcoming Leveson report stating that our priority had to be protecting the victims of press abuse. She noted that we have always supported a strong free press and that is not at odds with having a proper, independent, complaints system which will hold the press to account.

Ed talked about the One Nation vision he spelled out at conference saying that it is about everyone having a stake in the country's future, about sharing prosperity fairly and about protecting the things people value like the NHS. He said there were three tests for the forthcoming autumn statement – whether it secures the recovery, whether it makes the long term changes that are necessary, and whether it is fair. Ed stated that there would be no easy choices for the next Labour government but that there would be no way he would try to 'out-right the right' on policy. He agreed with colleagues that the welfare benefit changes being introduced by the coalition government are disastrous and that we will go on the front foot on that issue. I pressed Ed on the issue of the Coalition's attack on employment rights (the most recent example being the offer to exchange your employment rights for company shares), the scourge of under-employment masked by some of the reductions in unemployment and asked him to build up a narrative about 'good' work which pays and allows people to have a decent standard of living. Ed agreed that under-employment is a new form of unemployment and that the party should make more of this issue. There was some discussion about the process for selecting candidates in parliamentary by-elections. I argued for complete transparency of decision-making – we should not be afraid to publish who has been long-listed, who has been shortlisted and who sits on these panels. Ed was very clear that he wanted maximum openness in terms of selections and a paper will be brought to the next meeting of the Organisation Sub-Committee for discussion.

Other matters

- We agreed the NEC's membership of the party's new policy commissions as I was delighted to be elected as the Co-convenor of the new Better Politics Policy Commission, which will encompass Constitutional Affairs, Citizenship & Equalities issues. We also agreed the NEC's membership of its sub-committees and I was pleased to retain my membership of both the Organisation Sub-committee and the Disputes panel.
- The Party of European Socialists will be hosting a [major conference in Nottingham on Saturday 1st December](#) with Young Labour and Labour Students where young people from all over Europe will work together on campaigning to reverse the pan-European austerity measures that are ruining the hopes of a generation across Europe.
- On reviewing our arrangements for annual conference we agreed that in 2013 conference will run from 11am on the Sunday until 3pm on the Wednesday. CLPs will receive a formal notification of this change but if you have already booked accommodation you may wish to amend your booking as soon as possible.

This is my personal account of this meeting and should not be taken as the official record but please do pass on to other Labour members who may be interested.

Keeping in touch...

Since my last report I have been delighted to visit and talk with members in **Tooting CLP**, at the **Erith & Thamesmead CLP** gala dinner, **Orpington CLP**, **Arundel & South Downs CLP** and **Inverclyde CLP**, where I also spoke at the **Better Together campaign's public meeting with Alistair Darling on the future of the union**. I was also very pleased to support the **TUC march for A Future that Works** on the 20th October where I marched with my Southwark Labour colleagues. I have also been out **campaigning in our recent by-elections in Corby, Croydon North** and our local by-election in **East Walworth**. I sat on the **Middlesborough by-election shortlisting panel**, was **proud to chair a session at the inaugural Labour Women's Network Political day** and attend the **Bermondsey & Old Southwark and Camberwell & Peckham CLP Gala Dinners**. I have now visited 84 CLPs in the last 24 months and **you can watch my video, giving reflections on my first 2 years on the NEC and why I'll keep putting members first, [here](#)**. If you'd like me to visit your constituency to provide an NEC report or facilitate a policy discussion please don't hesitate to get in touch.